EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 649.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Stephen Sidney Schwartz, of Virginia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Stephen Sidney Schwartz, of Virginia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

Mitch McConnell, Joni Ernst, John Boozman, James E. Risch, Mike Rounds, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Crapo, Mitt Romney, John Barrasso, Shelley Moore Capito, Pat Roberts, Thom Tillis, Cindy Hyde-Smith, David Perdue, Lindsey Graham, Kevin Cramer, Tim Scott.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 911.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Nathan A. Simington, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Communications Commission for a term of five years from July 1, 2019.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Nathan A. Simington, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Communications Commission for a term of five years from July 1, 2019.

Mitch McConnell, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Joni Ernst, John Barrasso, Tim Scott, Lamar Alexander, Pat Roberts, Kevin Cramer, Shelley Moore Capito, Lindsey Graham, John Thune, Marco Rubio, Mike Crapo, Todd Young, Thom Tillis, Marsha Blackburn, Steve Daines.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS VACCINE

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, the Presiding Officer and I are here, and we have been meeting today in Washington at, really, a groundbreaking moment as we continue this battle for our health, for our economy, and against the virus. What makes this such a critical moment are the developments we have seen in the last 10 days regarding a vaccine.

Public health experts around the world have agreed, almost from day one, that the way to really find the end of this pandemic—the ultimate weapon—would be to develop a vaccine that worked. Less than a year ago, which was in January and February of this year, we were hearing that 2 years would set a record for developing a vaccine and that sometimes a vaccine that has been developed on a new disease like this has taken 3 and 5 and even 10 years or more. Yet here we are, less a year from the discovery of COVID–19, with not just one vaccine but two vaccines that have already applied for their use permits. Both vaccines have shown an effectiveness of more than 90 percent, and a third vaccine with a similar response is about to get to the place at which it, too, can apply for use.

These are incredible numbers. It wasn't that many months ago that healthcare experts were saying, if we get a vaccine that is effective 50 percent of the time or more, that the government should consider accepting that vaccine and making it available to people, and here we are with a 90 percent effective vaccine. I had the measles, and my kids had the measles shot, which seemed to pretty much eliminate the measles. It was 90 percent effective. This is the kind of vaccine that has been the most effective among the most effective vaccines we have ever had.

Pfizer and Moderna have both come forward and asked for their emergency use authorizations. The emergency use doesn't really mean they have cut any corners. The only thing we have failed to do is to watch the 30,000 or so people for another 2 or 3 years who were in both of these trials. That is why we can't say with certainty if this vaccine will last for a lifetime or if this vaccine will be a 3-year vaccine or even a 1-year vaccine. What we can say with certainty is that, about 95 percent of the time, it will prevent you from getting the disease. Of course, if people are prevented from getting the disease, they can't spread the disease, and that is why a 90 percent effective vaccine, like the measles vaccine, was basically 100 percent effective as long as people took it.

So we need to step back, really, I think, and look at the unconventional way we got here. How did we get from 3 to 5 to, maybe, 10 years to less than a year of discovering a virus for the very first time to our having a vaccine?

The way that researchers have been able to move forward with this and the way that Congress and the Trump administration have responded to this pandemic has been extraordinary. In our country, Operation Warp Speed has accelerated the development of this new vaccine through a fast-track process that could be described, really, in one word—unprecedented. Normally, vaccines take years. Researchers have to go out and secure funding, get approvals, and study results step by step to get to where we are today. Only then would a vaccine be determined to be safe and effective, and only then would manufacturing begin.

Normally, with a vaccine, the day the vaccine is approved is the day you start manufacturing. We know that this is not what is happening here. In fact, in just a few minutes, I am going to mention that the head of distribution is saying, on the day the vaccine is approved, we will start shipping millions of copies of that vaccine all over the country.

This all really started with Congress's deciding, as we put these COVID relief packages together from the very first couple of packages, that when it came to a cure, we were not going to let funding stand in the way nor were we going to let it stand in the way of investing some money somewhere that just simply didn't work because, by investing money where it didn't work, it allowed us to invest money where it did work. Congress appropriated $18 billion for vaccines and testing. About $12.5 billion has gone into the vaccine side. Most of the rest has gone into testing, with some going into therapy. This is a decision Congress made. With this vaccine, we are going to become partners in developing how we fight back.